



Pharmacology for Women's Health

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The Fragile Wisdom: An Evolutionary View on Women's Biology and Health. By Grazyna Jasienska. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; 2013, US \$37.00 (Hardcover). 336 p. ISBN: 978-0674047129

The Fragile Wisdom brings the biology and anthropology of sex differences to life by taking an evolutionary perspective on why certain health problems that never affected our ancestors, plague women today. A biological anthropologist specializing in reproductive ecology, Grazyna Jasienska postulates that women's biology and health are evolutionarily distinct from men's because of the relative energetic investment in reproduction and consequently executes her analysis of medical questions using the lens of sex.

In this text intended for an academic adult audience, Jasienska investigates emerging medical concerns by juxtaposing the biological demands of the world that human bodies evolved in with those of current industrialized society. She presents a very well-cited argument based on a broad spectrum of primary literature findings, from biochemistry bench work to anthropological field studies, yet the book has a narrative style reminiscent of storytelling. Jasienska frames her book around the important distinction that "Health and evolutionary fitness are not synonymous" (p. 2). She explores how this disjunction relates to reproductive cost/benefit balancing acts.

Jasienska discusses hormone variation, agriculture and estrogen levels, developmental programming, case studies of childhood diet and heart disease, intergenerational effects of slavery, the physical burdens of reproducing, factors affecting life span, how modern diet and exercise patterns are distinct from historical circumstances, evolutionary trade-offs, benefits of philanthropy, and gene-lifestyle interactions. Jasienska also offers a basic biological introduction to each topic she considers before delving into larger questions, which makes *The Fragile Wisdom* accessible regardless of the reader's particular background and specialty.

The way that Jasienska revisits hormone levels and energy storage from a variety of perspectives gives her argument a high level of coherency and stresses the broad implications of her work. It is rare to find a book that is able to simultaneously consider such a myriad of causes for biological disease. However, *The Fragile Wisdom* would be strengthened by exploring additional issues or by drawing on public health research to suggest interventions to combat the problems it presents.

Of note, Jasienska never attempts to advise the reader how to live a long and healthy life. Indeed, one of the main conundrums she grapples with is the fact that we are all products of our genetics, environment, and choices, in often-uncontrollable ways. She begins by ex-

plaining that "healthy" is a generally unattainable ideal. Returning to earlier hunter-forager subsistence patterns is not only impossible, but would also not necessarily fix the rising frequency of breast and gynecologic cancers or obesity and metabolic syndrome. Jasienska suggests, however, that becoming cognizant of how external factors impact the delicate balance of our internal biology might allow us to work toward a healthier future.

This text provides an important summary of current research knowledge across subfields of sex and gender health and synthesizes those findings to present a new holistic perspective on women's bodies. As engrossing as it is educational, *The Fragile Wisdom* leaves as many questions as it answers, in the best possible way.

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Pharmacology for Women's Health. Second Edition. By Mary C. Brucker and Tekoa L. King. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning; 2015. US \$78.62 (Hardcover). 1212 p. ISBN: 978-1284057485.

Pharmacology for Women's Health, Second Edition, provides an in-depth and updated review of the essential pharmacological agents utilized in women's health. The content includes a thorough, informative review of pharmacological treatments useful for both women consumers and their treating physicians. The text is divided as follows: "Section I: Introduction to Pharmacology," "Section II: Lifestyle and Preventative Healthcare Practices," "Section III: Essential Drug Categories," "Section IV: Pharmacotherapies for Common Conditions," "Section V: Gynecology," and "Section VI: Pregnancy and Lactation." The information is uniformly and cogently organized; each chapter includes a glossary that provides explanation of terms, as well as clinical examples for use of various pharmacological agents. For example, Section II: "Lifestyle and Preventative Healthcare Practices" is subdivided into chapters on vitamins and minerals, immunizations, medications to enhance wellbeing, smoking cessation strategies and techniques, drugs of abuse, and complementary and alternative medicine. Section III: "Essential Drug Categories" is comprised of detailed, well-written chapters on "anti-infective" agents, analgesia and anesthesia, antihistamines, and steroid hormones.

Each specific area begins with a detailed section on pharmacological treatments and ends with a section on complementary therapies. More complex, broad

disease entities, such as arrhythmias, are further delineated into more specific diseases (e.g. Atrial Fibrillation), followed by specific pharmacological treatments for specific clinical presentations. For example, Section IV, "Pharmacotherapies for Common Conditions," begins with a chapter (Chapter 15) on cardiovascular disease (CVD) that includes a glossary of terms, an introduction to CVD, a subsection discussing prevention strategies such as exercise and lifestyle modification, followed by other sections that are further categorized into particular CVD – related disease entities (e.g. Hypertension, Hyperlipidemia, Cerebral Vascular Disease, Peripheral Arterial Occlusive Disease, Systolic and Diastolic Heart Failure, and Cardiac Arrhythmias). Subsequent chapters in Section IV focus on other disease entities in the same way.

Pharmacology for Women's Health offers readers a concise and in-depth text covering a wide array of complex pharmacological treatments for a plethora of conditions. The book covers the most effective pharmacological and therapeutic treatments for women affected by non-gender specific conditions, as well as treatment options for conditions that only affect women (including obstetric and gynecologic-specific disease entities). Complex diseases and their pharmacological treatments are presented in an easy-to-follow, accessible, uniform format that will make it a frequent resource on the bookshelf. This text is highly recommended for health-conscious, informed consumers and as a reference for physicians treating women.

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Handbook of Gender and Sexuality in Psychological Assessment. Edited by Virginia M. Brabender and Joni L. Mihura. New York, NY: Routledge; 2016, US \$114.95 (Paperback). 730 p. ISBN: 978-1138782051.

Brabender and Mihura's *Handbook of Gender and Sexuality in Psychological Assessment* provides a comprehensive overview of how issues of gender and sexuality can impact both the assessor and the client during psychological assessment. The chapters elegantly weave together reviews of the current literature when it exists— noting where more research is warranted—along with illustrative case studies and vignettes, in order to provide suggestions for how to best interweave what is known into actual practice. This text does an excellent job of balancing the discussion of tools to reduce gender bias with an understanding of how gender- and sex-specific information can better inform assessment. A consistent theme tying the chapters together is that, while sex and gender issues are often not the main issue that brings the client in

for psychological assessment, adequately addressing issues of sex and gender can greatly enhance the assessor's understanding of the client and interpretation of the assessment results.

The introductory chapters, written by the editors, set the stage for the remainder of the book by defining essential terms, presenting a helpful introduction of assessor pitfalls, and noting suggestions for helpful assessor attitudes and behaviors during the different stages of psychological assessment. Several chapters of the book highlight how sex and gender, both that of the assessor and of the client, can interact with psychological assessment and influence specific disorders and traits. These chapters note that while gender nonconforming identities do not in and of themselves indicate underlying psychopathology, a better understanding of the psychological basis of such identities can still greatly inform and enhance treatment of such individuals seeking psychological assessment. The book includes excellent case illustrations and discussion of multi-dimensional gender-based issues such as its intersectionality with race, culture, and development. The final chapters discuss how to integrate the knowledge presented in the book into practice, to better train professionals, and to enhance professionals' motivation to change their biased thinking and/or behaviors.

Although there is some repetition between chapters, particularly in redefining terms throughout the handbook, each chapter is able to stand alone and to provide unique insight into how gender and sexuality influence assessment. The chapters, while informative and providing unbiased review of the literature, are also quite engaging, particularly the chapters that provide personal examples of the authors, which bolster the academic material presented. This text does not just explain epidemiological information about sex and gender differences in the assessment arena but also convincingly highlights reasons why it is important to further explore gender and sexuality in psychological assessment. Most chapters do assume prior knowledge of the assessment measures and psychopathology, and the book is therefore best suited to clinicians and researchers who are already knowledgeable on the topic but who want to gain better insight into the interplay between sex, gender, and assessment.

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Discovering Human Sexuality. Third Edition. Simon LeVay, Janice Baldwin, & John Baldwin. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 2015, US \$81.22 (Paperback). 645 p. ISBN: 978-1605352756.

In the third edition of *Discovering Human Sexuality*, LeVay, Baldwin, and Baldwin have compiled an astoundingly thorough introduction to the biology, psychology, and sociology of sex and sexuality. While